

# Veteran Updates

News and updates on Veterans issues from the San Francisco VA Health Care System • March 2017

## SFVAHCS Homeless Program Recognized by VA



In February, the San Francisco VA Health Care System (SFVAHCS) received a commendation from the VA Central Office for its hard work in supporting the 25 Cities Initiative. In March 2014 the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs launched the 25 Cities Initiative to assist communities with high concentrations of homeless Veterans in intensifying and integrating their local efforts to end Veteran homelessness.

The initiative concluded in September 2016, but contributed significantly to the recent progress in ending Veteran homelessness. Between 2014 and 2016, the 25 cities that participated in the initiative experienced a 22% reduction in Veteran homelessness.

Between January 2015 and August 2016, **29,499** Veterans were housed across the 25 targeted cities. Each city has developed a list that identifies all homeless Veterans by name so they can be linked to the appropriate services. From January 2015 until the initiative ended, each of 25 cities housed an average of 58 Veterans per month.

This initiative was a joint effort by VA, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), and local community partners to support the 25 communities with resources, guidance, and lessons learned as they build out and enhance their existing local homeless programs.

Through the initiative, VA and its federal partners worked to identify, by name, all of the remaining known homeless Veterans in their respective communities and worked to find permanent housing solutions for these Veterans and for other chronically homeless individuals.

Locally, SFVAHCS saw great outcomes for its chronically homeless Veterans thanks to this coordinated effort. Monthly HUD-VASH voucher distribution to San Francisco-area Veterans has significantly increased since the start of the 25 Cities Initiative, and the voucher distribution process has been streamlined due to greater interagency cooperation. With the help of the City of San Francisco, SFVAHCS has also been able to more effectively engage local landlords to help Veterans find safe and clean places to live.

**“I want to say how proud I am of the San Francisco HUD-VASH team, we have improved processes to improve Veteran care, and the SFVAHCS is a key player in the community to end Veteran homelessness!”**

— Jia Son, HUD-VASH Director for the San Francisco VA Health Care System

Though the 25 Cities Initiative has concluded, the work in San Francisco is not done. SFVAHCS continues to work with its local partners - including the City of San Francisco, Swords to Plowshares, and HUD - in its quest to end chronic Veteran homelessness. This working group has identified September 2017 as a target date to house all currently identified chronically homeless Veterans in San Francisco, and it is currently ahead of schedule in accomplishing that goal.

If you or someone you know is a homeless Veteran in San Francisco, please check out the variety of special resources SFVAHCS offers to assist its homeless Veterans: [www.sanfrancisco.va.gov/services/homeless/index.asp](http://www.sanfrancisco.va.gov/services/homeless/index.asp)

## Update Your Insurance Information

If you have private health insurance (whether through your employer, your spouse, or any other means), be sure that SFVAHCS has your most current information.

### *What's in it for me for providing health insurance information?*

- You will not be responsible to pay for any unpaid balance that your third party health insurance carrier does not cover. Depending on your Priority Group however, you may be required to pay a VA copayment for non-service connected care.
- Payments made to VA by your private health insurance carrier may allow VA to offset part or all of your VA copayment.
- Many private health insurance companies apply VA healthcare charges toward your annual deductible. Contact your private health insurance carrier for specific details concerning your coverage.

If you have not reported your insurance information, or if that information has changed, be sure to let us know the next time you check in for an appointment.

## MARCH is National Nutrition Month!



VA's National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention encourages Veterans and their families to jump start the spring season by using the following Eat Wisely tips:

1. Establish regular meal times. Try not to skip any meals because skipping meals leads to over-eating later in the day or evening.
2. Read food labels when you are purchasing food items. Pay attention to the portion size, the number of calories in each portion, and the amount of saturated and trans-fat in each portion.
3. Make small substitutions in your diet to cut calories. For example, drink water or unsweetened iced tea instead of high-calorie drinks. Choose low-calorie versions of salad dressing, cheese, sour cream, and mayonnaise. Go easy on fried foods –bake, broil, poach, or grill your food instead.
4. Plan meals and snacks, and make certain to have healthier food choices on hand. This makes it easier to resist trips to the vending machine and unhealthy snacking.
5. Portion your servings to control the amount. For example, plate your meal in the kitchen using portion control. Bag snacks, such as potato chips or cookies into single serving sized containers or zip-lock bags. When you have a craving, eat the serving size only. Remember to pass on seconds.
6. Control calories when dining out. At fast-food restaurants, “down-size” food and drinks instead of “super-sizing” or better yet, try new restaurants that offer interesting healthier food choices.
7. Share an entrée with a friend or family member. Do order a personal salad or side of vegetables. Ask restaurants to: “Please, “put the sauce on the side” (and try not to use it all), “hold the cheese”, “use low-calorie dressing” and try to avoid fried dishes.
8. Identify your “guilty pleasures” such as ice cream, cake, cookies, or potato chips. Continue to enjoy them by trying the low-calorie versions or by eating less of the regular versions.
9. Avoid places and situations that trigger eating. For example, if walking past the bakery causes donut cravings, try changing your route. Replace candy on your desk with fruit. Avoid eating while watching television, reading, working on the computer, or driving.
10. Be ACTIVE! Try substituting other activities for eating. For example, take a walk, walk with a friend, or dance to some music. Other activities allow you to avoid extra calories and can be more satisfying than eating.

To learn more about healthier eating, talk to your VA provider or visit our Food and Nutrition page: [www.sanfrancisco.va.gov/services/nutrition.asp](http://www.sanfrancisco.va.gov/services/nutrition.asp).

